

A SCRIPTURAL INSTRUCTION MANUAL

Book Five

WATER BAPTISM

UNDER THE NEW COVENANT

What Christ Commanded, What the Apostles Did
"Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins,
calling on the name of the Lord."

Acts 22:16

Established Upon the Authority of Holy Scripture

King James Version

Preface: Why Baptism Deserves Its Own Book

Book Four presented baptism as one of the three elements of Acts 2:38, establishing its salvific role through nine witnesses and addressing its most common objections. That coverage was necessary but compressed by design — there was more ground to cover. This book returns to baptism with dedicated focus, examining questions that deserve their own sustained treatment:

- What exactly is the mode of baptism, and why does it matter?
- What is the meaning of the name invoked at baptism?

- How does Matthew 28:19 relate to the consistent apostolic practice of baptizing in Jesus' name?
- What is the covenantal significance of baptism — what covenant does it enact, and what does that covenant provide?
- How do we rightly handle accounts like the thief on the cross, infant baptism traditions, and the claim that water is merely symbolic? This book proceeds through seven chapters, each addressing one dimension of New Covenant water baptism with the thoroughness the subject demands. The reader who has completed Book Four will find this volume an expansion of what was introduced there; the reader encountering this topic for the first time will find here a complete treatment.

How This Book Relates to Books Two and Four

Book Two established who is being baptized into — Jesus Christ, the full manifestation of the one God. Book Four established that baptism is required and what it accomplishes in the salvation transaction. This book establishes the specifics: how baptism is performed, in whose name, with what covenantal meaning, and how to answer every major objection to the apostolic practice.

Chapter One: Baptism Instituted by Christ

Before any question of mode, name, or theology can be addressed, the prior question must be settled: is baptism a human institution or a divine command? The answer determines everything. A human institution may be adapted, simplified, or replaced according to pastoral wisdom. A divine command may not.

1.1 The Great Commission

Matthew 28:18--20

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

The Great Commission is the risen, glorified Christ speaking with all authority over heaven and earth. Baptism is not suggested; it is commanded. It is not presented as a cultural practice of the Jewish church to be reconsidered for Gentile audiences; it is embedded in the universal commission given to the apostles for all nations. The authority behind this command is total.

Three features of Matthew 28:19 deserve careful attention:

1. The scope: 'all nations' — no ethnic, geographic, or cultural exclusion. Every human being, from every background, is the intended recipient of this commission.
2. The sequence: 'teach... baptizing... teaching' — baptism follows initial instruction in the gospel and precedes the ongoing teaching of discipleship. It is the covenantal entry point, not the graduation ceremony.
3. The name: a singular 'name' that encompasses Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. As Book Two established, this singular name is Jesus Christ, in whom all three titles are unified (Colossians 2:9).

Mark 16:16

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Mark's record of Christ's commission explicitly connects belief and baptism to salvation. Christ does not say 'he that believeth shall be saved and may optionally be baptized.' He says belief and baptism together lead to salvation. The absence of baptism is not mentioned as a separate condemning condition — unbelief is the condemning condition — but the

positive pattern Christ establishes is clear: genuine saving faith includes obedient baptism.

1.2 Baptism in Jesus' Own Ministry

Before commanding his disciples to baptize all nations, Jesus himself both submitted to baptism and sanctioned the baptizing ministry of his disciples. Both facts are significant.

Jesus Submitted to Baptism

Matthew 3:13--15

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him."

Christ was not baptized because he needed repentance from sin — he had no sin (Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21). He was baptized to 'fulfil all righteousness' — to identify with the humanity he had come to save, to consecrate the ordinance by his own participation, and to inaugurate his public ministry with the Father's audible affirmation ('This is my beloved Son' — Matthew 3:17). The One who commands baptism submitted to it himself.

Jesus' Disciples Baptized During His Ministry

John 4:1--2

"When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee."

Baptism was practiced under Christ's own authority during his earthly ministry, administered by his disciples at his direction. The ordinance did not originate at Pentecost or with Peter's sermon in Acts 2. It was embedded in the practice of Christ's ministry from the beginning and carried forward into the Great Commission at its close.

1.3 Not Optional: What the Apostolic Record Demonstrates

Scripture does not offer a deathbed clause, an inability exemption, or any alternative pathway around baptism. This is not an oversight. The apostolic record is consistent and unambiguous: every person who received the gospel in the New Testament and could be baptized was baptized — and they were baptized immediately.

- The three thousand at Pentecost were baptized the same day (Acts 2:41).
- The Ethiopian eunuch was baptized at the roadside the moment water was available (Acts 8:36--38).
- Paul was baptized within days of his Damascus road encounter — still without sight, immediately upon Ananias's arrival (Acts 9:18; 22:16).
- Cornelius and his household were baptized the same hour the Spirit fell (Acts 10:47--48).
- Lydia's household was baptized immediately upon belief (Acts 16:15).
- The Philippian jailer and his household were baptized the same night of his conversion, in the middle of the night, without delay (Acts 16:33).
- The Ephesian disciples were rebaptized in Jesus' name the same session Paul questioned them (Acts 19:5). In every recorded instance, the pattern is the same: conviction, repentance, immediate baptism. No one waited. No one was told to wait. No one was offered a substitute. The urgency of the apostolic practice is itself part of the doctrine. Ananias did not say to Paul, 'Believe in your heart and that will suffice.' He said: 'Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins' (Acts 22:16). Scripture offers no formula, prayer, or concession that substitutes for this command. The teacher who introduces such a substitute — however compassionately motivated — is adding to the apostolic pattern what the apostles

themselves never provided. Build doctrine on what Scripture says, not on what it is silent about.

The Apostolic Standard

Every recorded conversion in Acts was followed by immediate baptism in Jesus' name. That urgency is not incidental — it is the apostolic understanding of what baptism does and why it cannot be deferred. Teach what they taught. Preach with the same urgency they preached.

Chapter Two: The Mode of Baptism — Immersion

The word baptism comes directly from the Greek baptizo (βαπτίζω), which means to immerse, to dip, to plunge beneath a liquid. The word does not mean to pour or to sprinkle. This is not a matter of theological interpretation; it is a matter of Greek lexicography. The question of whether immersion is the required mode of baptism is therefore settled at the level of language before the theological arguments even begin.

2.1 The Greek Word Baptizo

Baptizo was a common Greek verb in the non-biblical literature of the ancient world. It was used of:

- A ship sinking beneath the waves (immersed in water)
- Cloth being dipped in dye to take on the color
- A sword being plunged into a body
- Vessels being dipped into liquid In every classical usage, baptizo involves submersion beneath a liquid. The word that means to pour is epicheo (ἐπιχέω). The word that means to sprinkle is rhantizo (ῥαντίζω). These are distinct Greek words describing distinct actions. The New Testament uses baptizo — immersion — for the ordinance of baptism. It never uses epicheo or rhantizo for baptism. The linguistic evidence alone establishes immersion as the required mode.

2.2 The Theological Argument: Burial and Resurrection

Romans 6:3--4

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Paul's theology of baptism requires immersion. The imagery is explicit: burial and resurrection. A burial requires going down — beneath the ground, beneath the water. A resurrection requires coming up. Sprinkling or pouring cannot enact the burial imagery that Paul's theology of baptism demands. The believer goes down into the water (death and burial with Christ) and comes up out of it (resurrection with Christ into new life). This is not incidental imagery; it is the theological meaning of the act. Changing the mode changes the meaning.

Colossians 2:12

"Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

Paul states it again in Colossians: buried with him in baptism, risen with him. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ are re-enacted in the physical act of water baptism. This is why the mode is not theologically neutral. Sprinkling or pouring may represent cleansing — but they cannot represent burial. Only immersion can enact the full theological reality Paul describes.

2.3 What History Confirms — and What It Cannot Override

Scripture has already settled the mode question by the word baptizo and by the burial-resurrection theology of Romans 6 and Colossians 2.

History's role is confirmation, not legislation. With that priority established, the historical record is unambiguous.

The early Christian practice of constructing large baptisteries — pools deep enough for full immersion — in church buildings across the ancient world speaks for itself. Communities do not quarry stone, haul water, and build immersion pools if their practice is sprinkling. The archaeological record across Syria, North Africa, Rome, and the Eastern church is consistent: the apostolic church immersed.

The Didache, a second-century document, is sometimes cited in favor of pouring. Read carefully, it proves the opposite. The Didache instructs: 'Baptize in living water. But if you have not living water, baptize in other water; and if you cannot in cold, in warm. But if you have neither, pour water three times upon the head.' Notice the structure: immersion in running water is the standard. Immersion in still water is the first concession. Warmer water is the second concession. Pouring is the final fallback — permitted only when no sufficient water exists at all. The Didache did not introduce pouring as an acceptable mode. It created a narrow emergency provision for extreme circumstances — and that very provision is proof that immersion was so universally assumed as the norm that a special dispensation had to be written to address the rare exception.

A post-apostolic document creating an emergency exception for scarce water is not scriptural authority for pouring. It is evidence that the church which came directly after the apostles regarded immersion as the unquestioned standard — standard enough that departing from it required explicit written justification. Scripture requires no such justification because it never contemplated another mode. The exception in the Didache belongs to the Didache. The command belongs to Scripture.

They are not equal authorities.

Sprinkling became normative in Western Catholic practice gradually through the medieval period, driven by the spread of infant baptism — infants being considered too fragile for immersion — not by any scriptural

revision or apostolic precedent. It entered through tradition, not through the Word.

2.4 The Mode Is Not a Secondary Question

The mode of baptism is not a matter of personal preference, cultural tradition, or pastoral accommodation. It is determined by the word Christ and the apostles used, by the theology Paul explicitly attaches to it, and by the consistent practice of the apostolic church. All three point in the same direction without qualification.

The word baptizo means immersion. Paul's theology of baptism requires burial and resurrection — which immersion enacts and no other mode can. The apostolic church immersed. There is no New Testament warrant for any other mode, no apostolic example of sprinkling or pouring as baptism, and no scriptural concession that permits substitution.

Changing the mode is not a minor adjustment. It severs the act from its meaning. A sprinkling may represent cleansing — but it cannot represent burial. And burial is not incidental imagery in Paul's theology; it is the theological center of what baptism does. The old man is buried. The new man rises. Remove the burial and you remove the resurrection. Remove the immersion and you remove the act that enacts what Scripture declares.

The apostles did not debate this. They immersed. Teach immersion.

Administer immersion. Do not soften the standard Scripture establishes by appealing to traditions that arose centuries after the apostles were gone.

Chapter Three: The Name of Baptism — Jesus Christ

The question of the name invoked at baptism is among the most theologically significant in the New Testament — and among the most consistently mishandled in both academic theology and popular Christianity. This chapter traces the full scriptural case for baptism in Jesus' name: from Christ's command in Matthew 28:19, through the apostles' uniform practice

in Acts, to the Christological and Oneness-theological foundations that make the apostolic practice the only coherent fulfillment of the Great Commission.

3.1 The Command: Matthew 28:19

Matthew 28:19

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The critical grammatical feature of this verse, established in Book Two, must be restated here as the foundation of this chapter: Jesus says 'in the name' — singular, not 'in the names' plural. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three titles. The command is to baptize in the single name that those three titles point toward and identify.

This raises the decisive question: what is that one name? Jesus does not specify it in Matthew 28:19. But the apostles who received this commission directly from him and were charged to carry it out for all nations did specify it — consistently, uniformly, and without a single exception in the entire New Testament record.

3.2 The Apostolic Record: Every Baptism in Acts

Every baptism recorded in the book of Acts was administered in the name of Jesus:

Witness 1 — Acts 2:38

(Pentecost, Jerusalem — Peter to the Jewish crowd): "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."

Witness 2 — Acts 8:16

(Samaria — Philip's evangelistic campaign): "For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Witness 3 — Acts 10:48

(Caesarea — Peter in the household of Cornelius): "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."

Witness 4 — Acts 19:5

(Ephesus — Paul re-baptizing disciples of John): "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Four accounts. Four cities. Four different apostolic ministers (Peter, Philip, and Paul). Four different audiences (Jewish, Samaritan, Gentile, disciples of John). One consistent pattern: the name of Jesus. Not one baptism in the book of Acts uses the triadic formula 'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.' The apostles who were present when Christ gave the Great Commission understood its command as being executed in the name of Jesus.

The Silence of the Triadic Formula

If Matthew 28:19 commands baptism in the formula 'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,' the apostles violated the Great Commission on every single occasion recorded in Acts. This is an untenable conclusion. The coherent reading is that the apostles correctly understood the singular 'name' of Matthew 28:19 to be Jesus — and carried out the Great Commission accordingly.

3.3 Why the Name Is Jesus: The Christological Foundation

The resolution of Matthew 28:19's singular 'name' into the name of Jesus is not arbitrary. It flows directly from the Christological foundation established in Book Two:

Colossians 2:9

"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

The fullness of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost — all three — dwells in Jesus Christ. Father is the title of God as eternal Creator and transcendent Spirit. Son is the title of God as incarnate Redeemer. Holy Ghost is the title of God as indwelling Sanctifier. One God, three modes of self-revelation, one name: Jesus Christ.

When the believer is baptized in the name of Jesus, they are not invoking merely the human name of a historical figure. They are invoking the full covenant name of the one God who is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost — the name above every name (Philippians 2:9), the name in which salvation alone is found (Acts 4:12), the name into which every baptism is administered. The three titles of Matthew 28:19 are not three names to be pronounced over the water. They are the description of the one God whose one name — Jesus — is what the apostles pronounced.

Acts 4:12

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

3.4 The Name and Covenant Identity

In the ancient world, to act 'in the name of' someone was to act with their authority, as their representative, and on the basis of their covenant relationship. When a legal document in the Roman world was executed 'in the name of Caesar,' it was not merely a verbal formula; it was an invocation

of the authority and legal power of the emperor. The action was enacted under his authority and created binding legal obligations.

To be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ is to be covenantally placed under his authority, to be identified as belonging to him, and to receive the covenant benefits that his name provides: the remission of sins, the indwelling Spirit, the covering of his blood. The name is not a formula to be recited over the water as a magic incantation. It is the covenant identity of the one under whose authority and into whose body the believer is being transferred.

Galatians 3:27

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

To be baptized into Christ — into his name, by his authority, under his covenant — is to put on Christ. The believer who comes up from the baptismal waters does not merely have a new religious status. They have a new identity. They are in Christ. Christ is upon them as a garment.

The name of Jesus, invoked at baptism, enacts this transfer of identity.

3.5 The Triadic Formula: Historical Development

The triadic formula 'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost' as a baptismal formula does not appear as an executed baptism in the New Testament. Its emergence as the standard Christian formula can be traced through the post-apostolic period:

- The Didache (c. 96--120 AD) permits baptism 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' — the earliest post-biblical appearance of the triadic formula as a baptismal instruction.
- Justin Martyr (c. 150 AD) describes baptism in the triadic names in his First Apology, reflecting a practice that was developing in his time.
- By the third and fourth centuries, the triadic formula had become the standard Western practice, and the earlier apostolic practice of baptism

in Jesus' name had been largely displaced. The development of the triadic formula is a clear case of post-apostolic tradition superseding apostolic practice. This is not an anti-Trinitarian observation; it is a historical one. The apostles, who received the Great Commission from Christ himself, baptized in Jesus' name. The church that followed them, several generations removed, adopted a different formula. The doctrinal method of Book One requires that apostolic Scripture take precedence over post-apostolic tradition.

Chapter Four: The Covenant Meaning of Baptism

Baptism is not merely a ceremony. It is a covenant act — the moment at which the believer formally enters the New Covenant through the appointed means. Understanding baptism as covenant is essential to understanding why it does what Scripture says it does.

4.1 Baptism as Covenant Entry

Every major covenant in Scripture has a sign — a physical act that marks the covenant's establishment and the covenantor's entry into it:

- The Noahic covenant: the rainbow (Genesis 9:12-13)
- The Abrahamic covenant: circumcision (Genesis 17:10-11)
- The Mosaic covenant: Passover and the sacrificial system (Exodus 12; Leviticus 17)
- The New Covenant: baptism in Jesus' name and the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38; Colossians 2:11-12) The parallel between circumcision and baptism is drawn explicitly by Paul:

Colossians 2:11--12

"In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein

also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

Paul identifies New Covenant baptism as the fulfillment of Old Covenant circumcision. Just as circumcision was the physical sign of entry into the Abrahamic covenant and marked the one circumcised as belonging to God's covenant people, baptism is the physical sign of entry into the New Covenant, marking the one baptized as belonging to Christ. The continuity is deliberate and theologically rich: the covenant-entry sign has changed (from the cutting of flesh to immersion in water), but its covenantal function has not.

4.2 What the Covenant Provides

The New Covenant, entered through baptism in Jesus' name, provides specific, concrete blessings that Scripture names:

Remission of Sins

Acts 2:38

"Baptized... for the remission of sins."

The Greek *aphesin* (ἄφεσις) means release, dismissal, discharge — the legal cancellation of the debt of sin. Not covering. Not deferral.

Release. The believer baptized in Jesus' name receives the complete discharge of their sin-debt, accomplished by Christ's blood and applied at the moment of obedient baptism.

Union with Christ's Death and Resurrection

Romans 6:5

"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

The Greek word translated 'planted together' is symphytoi (σύμφυτοι) — grown together, organically united. Baptism does not merely symbolize union with Christ's death and resurrection; it enacts it. The believer and Christ are grown together in the likeness of his death (going down into the water) and his resurrection (rising from it). This is covenant union of the most intimate kind.

The New Identity: In Christ

Galatians 3:27--29

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The new identity established at baptism is complete and comprehensive.

Every social distinction — ethnic, economic, gender — is transcended by the singular identity: in Christ. And this new identity carries with it the full inheritance of the Abrahamic promise. The believer baptized into Christ becomes Abraham's seed — an heir of the covenant God made with Abraham — by virtue of being in Christ, in whom all the promises of God find their Yes and Amen (2 Corinthians 1:20).

A Good Conscience Toward God

1 Peter 3:21

"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

The Greek eperotema (ἐπερωτήμα) — translated 'answer' — was used in legal and commercial contexts for a formal pledge or sworn undertaking.

Baptism is the believer's formal covenantal pledge — not a declaration of achieved righteousness, but an appeal to God's covenant grace through the name of Jesus and the resurrection that guarantees that grace is available.

4.3 The Blood Applied at Baptism

A question sometimes raised: if Christ's blood was shed at the cross — a completed, historical act — when is it actually applied to the individual believer? The New Testament's answer involves baptism.

Acts 22:16

"Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

The washing away of sins is connected to baptism in Jesus' name. The blood shed at Calvary is the basis and the substance of that washing; baptism in Jesus' name is the appointed moment of its application. The cross accomplished what baptism applies. Without the cross, baptism is empty water. Without baptism in Jesus' name, the blood of the cross — though sufficient for all — has not yet been applied to that specific person through the covenant means God appointed.

Revelation 1:5

"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

The washing from sins is in his blood — but it is a washing, an active cleansing, not merely a historical fact to be intellectually affirmed.

Acts 22:16 describes when that washing occurs in the life of the individual: at baptism in Jesus' name, calling on the name of the Lord.

The blood of Christ, applied through the covenant act of baptism, washes the sins away.

Chapter Five: Common Objections to Apostolic Baptism

This chapter addresses the most frequently raised objections to New Covenant baptism: its necessity, its mode, and the name invoked. Each objection is stated in its strongest form before being answered from Scripture.

5.1 'Baptism Is Just a Symbol'

OBJECTION:

"Baptism is an outward sign of an inward grace already received. It is a public declaration of faith, not a means of salvation. The real transaction happened when you believed; baptism just witnesses to it publicly."

ANSWER: This position is common in evangelical Protestantism, but it cannot be sustained by the texts that describe baptism's function. Consider what Scripture actually says baptism does:

Acts 2:38 says it is 'for the remission of sins' — not because sins have already been remitted. Acts 22:16 says it 'washes away sins' — not that it publicly declares sins already washed. 1 Peter 3:21 says 'baptism doth also now save us' — not that it announces salvation already received. Romans 6:3-4 says we are 'buried with him by baptism into death' — describing an event, not a ceremony commemorating an event. Galatians 3:27 says those 'baptized into Christ have put on Christ' — the putting on occurs at baptism.

The symbolic reading of baptism requires that every one of these passages be reread against its plain sense. A reading that reduces baptism to a symbol must reinterpret 'washes away sins' to mean 'publicly declares that sins have already been washed.' That is not what the words say. The most natural, consistent reading of every baptism text in the New Testament is that baptism accomplishes what these texts say it accomplishes.

The Hermeneutical Test

Read Acts 22:16 to a new believer unfamiliar with evangelical tradition. Ask them what it means. Almost without exception they will say: 'baptism washes your sins away.' The symbolic reading requires theological training to impose — it is not the natural reading of the text.

5.2 'The Thief on the Cross Proves Baptism Is Not Necessary'

OBJECTION:

"Jesus promised the thief paradise without baptism. If baptism were necessary, the thief would have been required to be baptized."

ANSWER: This objection has been addressed in Book Four, but it is so frequently raised that it deserves a dedicated response here as well.

The thief on the cross died on the same day as Christ — after Christ, in fact. John 19:31--33 records that the soldiers broke the legs of the two crucified beside Jesus to hasten their deaths, but did not break Christ's legs because he had already died first. The thief died within the same window of time as Christ, before the resurrection, before the ascension, and before Pentecost. The New Covenant did not come into legal force until the death of the testator — Christ himself (Hebrews 9:17: 'a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth'). Christ's death is what enacted it. Pentecost — fifty days later — is when its terms were first proclaimed and the Holy Ghost first given (John 7:39). The thief died before any of that occurred.

The thief is a pre-Pentecost, pre-New-Covenant case. He died under the covenant that was still in force at the time of his death: the Old Covenant, under which sins were covered by the blood of animals and mercy could be extended directly by Christ in person, whose authority to forgive sins on

earth was explicit (Mark 2:10). Citing the thief as the model for New Covenant salvation is like citing the practice of the tabernacle as the model for New Covenant worship — it uses a pre-covenant example to override a post-covenant command.

Furthermore: where did the thief go? Paradise — not heaven. Under the Old Covenant, sins were covered, not removed (Hebrews 10:4). The thief's sins were covered. Heaven requires complete removal. The thief waited in paradise for what Christ's death and resurrection would accomplish. This is consistent: the thief received Old Covenant mercy, not New Covenant washing. **5.3 'Cornelius Received the Spirit Before Baptism — So Baptism Is Optional'**

OBJECTION:

"In Acts 10, Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before Peter baptized him. If God gave the Spirit before baptism, clearly baptism is not required."

ANSWER: The Cornelius account is exceptional and is treated as such by Peter himself. The Spirit fell before baptism as a sovereign sign to the Jewish believers present — including the skeptical circumcision party (Acts 10:45) — that Gentiles were full recipients of the New Covenant promise. It was a covenantal demonstration, not the establishment of a new normative pattern.

Peter's immediate response to the Spirit's falling is decisive: 'Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?' (Acts 10:47). He does not say: 'They have the Spirit — baptism is now unnecessary.' He says: 'They have the Spirit — therefore no one can forbid them water.' The Spirit's arrival is his argument for baptism's necessity, not against it. And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord (verse 48). The full apostolic pattern was completed.

The Cornelius account establishes that the Spirit is sovereign and may move in sequences different from the norm. It does not establish that any element of Acts 2:38 is optional. Cornelius was still baptized.

5.4 'Infant Baptism Is Valid — The Promise Is to Your Children'

OBJECTION:

"Acts 2:39 says the promise is to you and to your children. This supports baptizing infants to bring them into the covenant, just as circumcision brought Israelite children into the Abrahamic covenant."

ANSWER: The parallel between circumcision and baptism is real — Paul draws it in Colossians 2:11-12. But the parallel does not support infant baptism; it actually undermines it. Under the Old Covenant, circumcision was administered to infant males as the sign of their birth into the covenant community. Under the New Covenant, baptism is the sign of the new birth — which requires repentance, faith, and the specific response of Acts 2:38.

An infant cannot repent. An infant cannot believe. An infant cannot call on the name of the Lord. These are not optional prerequisites that can be waived for the very young; they are the nature of the transaction.

The New Covenant entry is not hereditary birth; it is spiritual new birth. You are not born into the New Covenant because your parents are in it. You enter it yourself, through your own repentance, your own baptism in Jesus' name, and your own reception of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 2:39 ('the promise is to your children') means the promise is available to your children — not that it is automatically applied to them by virtue of their parentage. Your children must repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Ghost for themselves. The promise is available. The obedience is their own.

The practice of infant baptism entered Christian history through the influence of the Augustinian theology of original sin — the conviction that unbaptized infants who died were in spiritual danger. It was defended on theological grounds, not on direct scriptural command. No infant baptism appears anywhere in the New Testament.

5.5 'Paul Was Not Sent to Baptize — So Baptism Is Secondary'

OBJECTION:

"1 Corinthians 1:17 says 'Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.' Paul himself distinguishes baptism from the gospel. This proves baptism is not part of the essential gospel message."

ANSWER: Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 1:17 must be read in context. The Corinthian church was fragmenting into factions based on which apostle had baptized them — 'I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas' (verse 12). Paul is correcting the error of treating baptism as an act of personal allegiance to a human minister. He thanks God that he personally baptized very few of them — specifically so no one could claim to be 'of Paul' based on his baptism of them (verse 15).

Paul is not saying baptism is unimportant. He is saying his apostolic calling was primarily to proclaim the gospel, and he delegated the administration of baptism to co-workers precisely to prevent the Corinthian factionalism. He elsewhere describes baptism as burial and resurrection with Christ (Romans 6:3-4), as putting on Christ (Galatians 3:27), and as the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5). A man who believed baptism to be secondary would not have described it in those terms.

Furthermore: Paul himself was baptized (Acts 9:18; 22:16). He baptized Lydia's household (Acts 16:15), the Philippian jailer and his household (Acts 16:33), Crispus and Gaius and others in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:14-16), and the Ephesian disciples of John (Acts 19:5). His statement in 1 Corinthians

1:17 is a correction of factionalism — not a demotion of baptism from its apostolic importance.

Chapter Six: Rebaptism — When Is It Necessary?

A question of significant pastoral importance: if a believer was previously baptized — but not in Jesus' name, or not by immersion, or before genuine repentance — should they be rebaptized? The New Testament addresses this question directly.

6.1 The Ephesian Precedent

Acts 19:1--6

"And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

The Ephesian account is the definitive New Testament precedent for rebaptism. These were genuine disciples of John — sincere believers who had received John's baptism of repentance. They were not false believers or casual inquirers. Yet Paul determined that John's baptism was insufficient for New Covenant standing and rebaptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus. They then received the Holy Ghost.

This account establishes a clear principle: a previous baptism that was not administered in Jesus' name is not the baptism Christ commanded for the New Covenant. It is not a question of the sincerity of the previous baptism or the godliness of the one who administered it. John was the greatest prophet (Matthew 11:11). His baptism was from heaven (Matthew 21:25). And yet it was not sufficient for New Covenant entry. The Ephesian disciples needed rebaptism in Jesus' name.

6.2 When Rebaptism Is Indicated

Following the Ephesian precedent, rebaptism is appropriate in the following circumstances:

- Baptism administered in the triadic formula 'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost' rather than in the name of Jesus Christ. The name invoked at baptism is not a minor detail; as Chapter Three establishes, it is the covenant name that enacts the transfer of identity and the application of the blood. A baptism performed in three titles rather than in the one name of Jesus is not the apostolic baptism.
- Baptism by sprinkling or pouring rather than immersion. The mode is inherent in the word (baptizo — immersion) and inseparable from the burial-and-resurrection theology Paul applies to it. A sprinkling is not a burial.
- Baptism administered before genuine repentance. If a person was baptized as an infant, or was baptized at an age of decision before genuine conviction and turning from sin, the baptism did not enact what Acts 2:38 describes repentance as providing.

Pastoral Note on Rebaptism

When counseling a believer about rebaptism, the question to ask is not 'Was your previous baptism sincere?' but 'Was it the baptism Christ commanded and the apostles administered?' Sincerity does not determine the validity of a covenantal act;

the terms of the covenant do. The Ephesian disciples were sincere. They were still rebaptized.

6.3 What to Say to the Previously Baptized

Many people who encounter the apostolic teaching on baptism in Jesus' name have already been baptized — often sincerely, often meaningfully, often in a context of genuine faith and community. The apostolic minister must handle this with both truth and pastoral care.

The truth: the baptism they received, however sincerely administered, was not the baptism of Acts 2:38 if it was not administered in Jesus' name by immersion following genuine repentance. The covenantal transaction that Acts 2:38 describes has not yet occurred in their life.

The care: this is not a verdict on their sincerity, their faith, or their relationship with God to this point. God has been at work in their life. The Holy Spirit has been drawing them. The conviction they feel upon hearing the apostolic truth is itself the work of God. Now, having heard what they did not previously know, they have the opportunity to complete the obedience that God has always intended for them. Rebaptism is not a correction of a failure; it is the completion of a journey.

Chapter Seven: Technical Reference and Study Guide

7.1 Greek and Hebrew Terms

Baptizo (βαπτίζω) — to immerse, to dip, to plunge — the word from which 'baptism' is transliterated; inherently connotes full submersion

Epicheo (ἐπιχέω) — to pour over — the Greek word for pouring; NOT used for baptism in the New Testament

Rhantizo (ῥαντίζω) — to sprinkle — the Greek word for sprinkling; NOT used for baptism in the New Testament; used for Old Covenant purification rites (Hebrews 9:13, 19, 21)

Onoma (ὄνομα) — name — singular in Matthew 28:19; one name that encompasses Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

Aphesin (ἄφεσιν) — remission, release, discharge — the legal cancellation of the sin-debt; used in Acts 2:38

Symphytoi (σύμφυτοι) — grown together, organically united — used in Romans 6:5 for the believer's union with Christ in death and resurrection

Eperotema (ἐπερώτημα) — pledge, appeal, formal covenantal response — used of baptism in 1 Peter 3:21; a legal/covenantal term

Enduo (ἐνδύω) — to clothe, to put on — used in Galatians 3:27 for the new identity received at baptism: 'put on Christ'

Eis (εἰς) — into, unto, for the purpose of — the preposition in 'baptized for the remission of sins'; purposive and forward-pointing

7.2 The Baptism Accounts of Acts: A Summary Table

Acts 2:38 — Jerusalem, Day of Pentecost

Who: Jewish pilgrims from across the Roman world, convicted by Peter's sermon. Minister: Peter. Formula: 'in the name of Jesus Christ.' Result: Three thousand baptized and received the Holy Ghost. Note: The foundational apostolic pattern.

Acts 8:12--16 — Samaria

Who: Samaritans who believed Philip's preaching. Minister: Philip (baptism), then Peter and John (laying on of hands for the Spirit).

Formula: 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' (verse 16). Note: First Gentile-adjacent expansion; Spirit received separately through apostolic laying on of hands.

Acts 8:36--38 — The Ethiopian Eunuch

Who: An Ethiopian court official, reading Isaiah. Minister: Philip.

Formula: Not specified, but Philip had just been baptizing Samaritans in Jesus' name and would do so consistently. Note: The eunuch asked 'What doth hinder me to be baptized?' — Philip answered and baptized him immediately.

Acts 9:18; 22:16 — Paul in Damascus

Who: Saul of Tarsus. Minister: Ananias. Formula: Acts 22:16 — 'wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.' Note: Paul himself was baptized in Jesus' name.

Acts 10:47--48 — Caesarea, Household of Cornelius

Who: Gentiles — Cornelius and his household. Minister: Peter. Formula: 'in the name of the Lord' (verse 48). Note: Spirit fell before baptism as a sovereign sign; Peter still commanded baptism.

Acts 16:15 — Philippi, Lydia's Household

Who: Lydia of Thyatira and her household. Minister: Paul. Note: First European baptism; household baptism administered by Paul.

Acts 16:33 — Philippi, the Jailer's Household

Who: The Philippian jailer and all his household. Minister: Paul and Silas. Note: Baptized the same hour of the night, immediately following the earthquake and the jailer's conversion.

Acts 18:8 — Corinth

Who: Crispus (synagogue ruler), his household, and many Corinthians.

Minister: Paul (some), co-workers (most — per 1 Corinthians 1:14-16).

Acts 19:1--6 — Ephesus, Disciples of John

Who: About twelve men previously baptized with John's baptism. Minister: Paul. Formula: 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' (verse 5). Note: The definitive rebaptism precedent; Holy Ghost received with tongues immediately after.

7.3 Study Guide

Chapter One — Instituted by Christ

4. What two features of Matthew 28:19 establish baptism as a universal command rather than a Jewish cultural practice?
5. Why did Jesus himself submit to baptism if he had no sin requiring repentance? What did his baptism accomplish?
6. How would you counsel a genuine believer who, due to circumstances beyond their control, is unable to receive baptism?
7. (Advanced) John 4:2 says Jesus himself did not baptize but his disciples did. What does this tell us about the administrative nature of baptism and the authority under which it is administered?

Chapter Two — The Mode

8. What does the Greek word baptizo mean? What words would a Greek speaker use if they meant pouring or sprinkling?
9. How does Romans 6:3-4 establish immersion as the required mode theologically, not just linguistically?
10. What historical evidence from the early church confirms immersion as the apostolic practice?
11. (Advanced) If someone was sincerely sprinkled and cannot be immersed due to a medical condition, how would you apply the principle from Chapter One on involuntary inability?

Chapter Three — The Name

12. Why is the singular 'name' in Matthew 28:19 the decisive grammatical feature of the verse?
13. List the four apostolic baptisms in Acts. What name was used in each case?
14. How does Colossians 2:9 resolve the relationship between the three titles of Matthew 28:19 and the single name of Jesus?
15. (Advanced) Trace the historical development of the triadic formula from the Didache through the Council of Nicaea. At what point did it become standard Western practice, and what was driving that development?

Chapter Four — Covenant Meaning

16. What is the relationship between circumcision and baptism in Colossians 2:11-12? What has changed, and what remains the same?
17. What does *aphesin* mean? What is the difference between remission of sins and the covering of sins?
18. How does Acts 22:16 describe the relationship between the blood of Christ shed at Calvary and what happens at baptism?
19. (Advanced) The word *symphytoi* in Romans 6:5 describes the believer's union with Christ in baptism as organic — grown together. What does this organic language imply about the nature of the covenant union baptism enacts?

Chapter Five — Objections

20. What is the symbolic view of baptism? Which specific texts does it have the most difficulty explaining?
21. What covenantal argument resolves the thief-on-the-cross objection?
22. How does Peter's response to the Cornelius event actually support baptism's necessity rather than undermine it?

23.(Advanced) Respond to the infant baptism argument. Why does the circumcision-baptism parallel actually argue against infant baptism rather than for it?

Chapter Six — Rebaptism

24.What three circumstances indicate that rebaptism is appropriate?

25.What did Paul determine about John's baptism in Acts 19? Why was it insufficient for New Covenant standing?

26.How would you explain the need for rebaptism to a sincere believer who was previously baptized in a Trinitarian formula?

27.(Advanced) Paul's question to the Ephesian disciples — 'Unto what then were ye baptized?' — implies that the content and formula of baptism matter, not just the act itself. What principle does this establish for apostolic baptismal practice?

A Closing Word: The Water Still Speaks

Every time a believer goes down into the water in Jesus' name, the gospel is proclaimed in act. Not in words only — in the physical re-enactment of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The old life goes under. The new life comes up. Sins are washed away. The name of the Lord Jesus is called upon. The covenant is enacted.

This is not a ceremony of human invention. It is a command of the risen Lord. It is the consistent pattern of the apostles who received that command directly from him. It is what three thousand people did on the day the church began. It is what every apostolic convert in the book of Acts did without exception. And it is what every person who hears the full gospel and genuinely believes it will want to do — because genuine faith obeys.

Arise, and be baptized. Wash away your sins. Call on the name of the Lord.

Romans 6:4

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Continue to Book Six:

The Gift of the Holy Ghost